

Preliminary Results of Mid-Career Study

In FY11, ASMP had the pleasure of hosting Ph.D. student Ashley Woods for her community psychology practicum. She contributed to the research team's longitudinal study by interviewing mid-career teachers (MCTs) who were served by ASMP in 2004-05 and/or 2005-06, and who currently remain teaching in Alaska's public K-12 schools.

Given teacher retention issues that negatively impact the relationship between school and community, teacher turnover becomes a "social problem" in need of a community-level intervention. As one form of intervention, ASMP focuses on preparing and mentoring early career teachers living and working in the diverse communities throughout Alaska.

ASMP researchers designed a mixed-methods study from a strengths-based perspective, including a qualitative component to examine the concepts of stress and coping. To discover their strengths in coping with the day-to-day stressors that teacher's experience, mostly in rural Alaska, 13 interviews were conducted with successfully retained, formerly ASMP-mentored teachers who had participated in ASMP at least 5 years earlier.

ASMP's preliminary results indicate that key characteristics and behaviors enabled teachers to cope with Alaska-specific issues and grow a sense of effective teaching. For instance, teachers who fostered or held realistic expectations for teaching in Alaska were able to cope with stressors, such as having limited access to resources. Teachers also coped with the disconnect between the school and the community by seeking out ways to connect with community members. Finally, successful teachers addressed cultural differences that affected student performance by being student-centered, creating relevant connections between the content and students' real lives.

These preliminary results highlight the importance of teacher preparation, teacher induction, support, continued professional development, and teacher engagement with students' communities to improve retention across the U.S., and in culturally diverse, rural communities specific to Alaska.

—adapted from Ashley Woods, MS, UAF

ASMP continues to track teacher retention year by year. With the tenure of the project now at eight years the longitudinal study also allowed the research team to calculate a five-year retention rate. Nationally, about 50% of the teachers remain in the profession after five years (Ingersoll, *Is There Really a Teacher Shortage*, 2003). For this cohort of mid-career teachers, 56% were still teaching in the state after 5 years. The research team will continue to analyze five-year retention rates to monitor progress.

Category	04-05	05-06	06-07	07-08	08-09	09-10	10-11
Overall	79%	78%	77%	81%	79%	87%	82%
Same school	71%	71%	66%	72%	69%	73%	75%
Same district	7%		5%	5%	7%	6%	3%
New district	1%	7%	6%	4%	3%	8%	4%
Rural		74%	72%	78%	77%	86%	78%
Urban		92%	93%	91%	86%	89%	92%

Percent of Teachers Retained by Year

A Survey of Super's

During the Fall of 2011, ASMP conducted a survey of Alaska's superintendents to determine the effectiveness of the program from the perspective of school district leadership. Of the superintendents of Alaska's 54 school districts, 38 (70.3%) responded to a survey of 17 questions ranging from descriptive and demographic inquiries, to more specific impacts of ASMP's service within districts.

Highlighted questions and results are as follows:

Question 16— Rate your overall experience with the Alaska Statewide Mentor Project.

- 97% of districts with intimate knowledge of ASMP are "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with the project.

Question 10— Do you feel mentoring by the Alaska Statewide Mentor Project has helped increase retention of early career teachers in your district?

- 84% of districts with intimate knowledge of ASMP feel that the project has helped increase teacher retention "a lot", "quite a bit" or "some".

Question 11— Do you feel mentoring by the Alaska Statewide Mentor Project has helped to improve student achievement in classrooms of early career teachers in your district?

- 88% of districts with intimate knowledge of ASMP feel that the project has helped improve student achievement "a lot", "quite a bit" or "some".

Question 12— Do you feel mentoring by the Alaska Statewide Mentor Project has helped to improve instruction in classrooms of early career teachers in your district?

- 89% of districts with intimate knowledge of ASMP feel that the project has helped improve instruction "a lot", "quite a bit" or "some".



Investments in Innovation (i3) Validation Study

The University of Alaska Statewide Office of Academic Affairs & Research was awarded the prestigious Investments in Innovations (i3) grant through the U.S. Department of Education. Submitted as the Alaska Statewide Mentor Project (ASMP) Urban Growth Opportunity, this expanded research effort will increase the number of early career teachers receiving mentoring in urban areas, while also conducting a rigorous experimental design to validate the ASMP model with a high level of fidelity.

Two criteria govern the decisions of the program while planning on how to carry out the research with high fidelity: randomization and securing the proposed number of teachers and mentors. To these ends the i3 start up team is working with districts to make the best decisions to begin implementation in Fall 2012. The grant will extend ASMP mentoring to urban school districts including Anchorage, Mat-Su, Kenai Peninsula, Juneau, Kodiak, and Sitka. A third-party agency, Education Northwest, will evaluate the effects of mentoring on teacher retention, teacher effectiveness, and student achievement. In lieu of the proposed two cohorts of early career teachers receiving two years of ASMP mentoring, a third cohort will be added. Further, the setting will allow ASMP to examine early career teachers with and without ASMP mentoring, and will provide the highest level of evaluation of the project's goals to date.

	09-10	10-11	11-12	12-13 (estimates)
Mentors	27	28	22.5	41
Districts (of 54)	43	43	34	48
Schools (of 513)	189	188	142	230
Early career teachers	384	406	330	615
Caseload ratio	1:15	1:14	1:15	1:15

This table shows some historical values of early career teachers, schools and districts who were served by ASMP mentors. The academic years AY10 (09-10) and AY11 are representative of many of the previous years ranging back to AY06 and slightly higher than the original year AY05.

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Have you read ASMP's research publications?

alaskamentorproject.org/research.php

In the Next Issue ... **Planning for the 2012–2013 School Year!**

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